

# Class Lines among the American Negroes.

By I. A m t e r.

The "All-Race Conference" of "Negro Sanhedrin", which was held some time ago in Chicago, revealed that the class lines separating society in general are at last being clearly manifested among the Negroes. Not that they have not existed before; but the efforts that have been made by Negro politicians and fanatics to arouse and organize the Negroes as a race are failing because the Negro bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie realise that their interests are closer to those of the white bourgeoisie than to those of the Negro proletariat and exploited tenant farmer.

The All-Race Conference was dominated by the petty-bourgeoisie and intellectual elements. Presided over by Kelly Miller, the well-known professor of sociology at Howard University, Washington, and directed by him into the channels that he and his coterie desired, the conference refused to take a definite, outspoken stand on the questions affecting the Negroes most closely, viz, the Ku Klux Klan race discrimination and the labour question. It was apparent from the outset, that a conglomeration of representatives of organizations reaching from the Y. M. C. A., Baptists and other religious bodies, to college fraternities, the petty-bourgeois National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, down finally to the African Blood Brotherhood and the Workers' Party would accomplish nothing definite. It was to be an All-Race conference, and surely did include every phase of Negro activity. The proletarian and revolutionary delegates, however, were almost completely denied the privilege of the floor and were compelled to denounce the chairman of the conference for the manner in which he was playing the game of the white bourgeoisie in the conference. The purpose of the conference was clear: it was to unite the whole Negro population of the country in order by organized effort to force the abrogation of the "Jim Crow" and other discriminatory laws and practices which deprive the Negro of social, economic and political rights.

The Workers' Party and the African Blood Brotherhood had conducted a militant campaign to make the conference a success. In fact, the Daily Worker, organ of the Workers' Party in Chicago, was the only paper that contained accounts of the conference, the capitalist press completely sabotaging it. The issues that the Workers' Party delegates raised were either completely ignored or so distorted that the life was taken out of them. In a word, Negro capitalism ruled the conference.

Attempts were made to keep the discussion of the labour problem entirely from the floor. **Ninety-five per cent of the Negro population of the U. S. are workers**, but of the 250 delegates representing 61 organizations at the conference only 16 were workers. Although pronounced to be the main issue of the conference, the chairman tried to relegate the labour problem to the commission entirely, or to a side-conference that should convene while the main conference was going on. Owing to the insistence of the delegates of the Workers' Party and of the African Blood Brotherhood, who earned great applause from the whole conference, the chairman had to consent to a discussion on the last day.

The issue of Negro labour is becoming an acute one for all American labour. During the war, about 500,000 Negroes migrated to the industrial centres of the North, owing to the great demand for labour. After the War, many of them returned to the South. But when the new wave of prosperity set in, 450,000 packed their bags and went to the North. There they came into competition with white labour, and were ready to underbid it. This was due primarily to the fact that the Negroes can join but few unions, and no efforts are made to organize them. The result is that the Negroes either become scabs, or, in more recent time, join the "company" unions which are formed by the employers to keep the workers from the regular unions. Despite the fact that the black workers have put up splendid fights side by side with the white workers, as for instance, during the steel strike of 1919, in the miners' strikes of 1921 and 1922, and at the present time in the needle trade strike in Chicago, Gompers does not consider it necessary to carry on any organizational work among them.

The Workers' Party delegates presented a resolution exposing the weakness of the labour movement as due partly to the fact that it ignores the Negro workers, and calling upon the

American Federation of Labour and independent unions to admit the Negroes on a basis of equality. The Negroes, according to the resolution, are not to be organized in separate unions, but are to be joined up with the main body of labour organisation.

The resolution was modified in the Labour Committee, but was completely emasculated by the conference, in that it deplored the fact that "the exploitation of Negro labour in the conflict between capital and organized labour is unfair and detrimental, and that the principle of equal pay, recognition of Negro workers in fields where labour is organized, and community assistance to Negro workers in industrial centres and organized financial relief in farming centres are all highly desirable." Compers or Gary could not have written a resolution more acceptable to the capitalist class.

A conference of a race that is supremely a working race, which could adopt a resolution of that nature, was capable of anything. The Ku Klux Klan resolution of the Workers' Party was the only one presented to the conference, yet it was killed in the committee, so that the All-Race Conference is silent on one of the most serious menaces, not only to the black, but also to the white workers. The W.P. resolution called on the black workers to line up with the white workers in organized bodies to resist the attacks of the Ku Kluxers. But as one delegate asserted if they speak their mind they will face the tar and feathers and possibly the rope when they return home. The Negro worker and tenant farmer are not afraid to fight. What they lack today is organization, and the All-Race Conference should have provided that. The Negro bourgeoisie and petty-bourgeoisie know how to avoid the attacks of the Ku Kluxers by assuming the same capitalist attitude towards the Negro worker that the white capitalist does.

Race segregation is one of the worst handicaps that the Negroes labour under. They are forced to live in certain parts of the town, where the rents are 30 to 100% higher than similar quarters in other parts of the town. Generally the lodgings are allowed to deteriorate, so that the Negro worker, who earns lower wages and is forced to pay higher rents, shows greater mortality than white workers. According to insurance statistics, 50% of all Negro babies die in their first year, a splendid testimonial to American "justice" toward the Negro. Negro capitalists and real estate sharks gain by race segregation — their delegates in the committee therefore, voted down the resolution, which called for the formation of tenants' unions "so as to be able in an organized way to refuse to pay exorbitant rents, or to consent to live in inferior buildings or segregated districts."

Instead of fighting for the dropping of the "colour bar" in all American schools and colleges, the conference, under the leadership of the Negro intellectuals, asked for more Government aid for Negro schools and universities. It is only a matter of jobs with these intellectuals, who thus have a monopoly of Negro education. The Workers' Party resolution states that "any involuntary separation of the children of the two races in schools is but preparation for a future Jim Crow life. Enforced segregation in schools is a necessary preliminary to segregation in street cars, railroad cars, restaurants, residence districts, hotels and theatres, and creates a ground of race distinction which leads to continued disfranchisement at the ballot box... For each dollar spent on the education of a white child, ten cents is spent on the "education" of a Negro child." The resolution demands the nationalisation of the school system, and a constitutional amendment forbidding any segregation or separation of races or creeds in the public schools. It was quite comprehensible for Miller to oppose the resolution, for his Negro university is subsidised by the government and he wished to provide jobs for more of his friends in similar institutions.

Support for a Labour Party was denied, despite the fact that both a Republican and a Democratic government disregard the Fourteenth Amendments to the constitution, which supposedly guarantee suffrage to the Negro. The Negro politician and the upper stratum of Negro society can vote and they alone cast the Negro vote. The South with the Negro disfranchised is solid for the Democratic Party, which would lose its hold were the Negro enfranchised. The Republican Party does not dare to take any steps for the enfranchisement of the Negro, for that would estrange the White south even more than today and destroy all hopes of the Republicans gaining a foothold in the South until the Negroes were actually given the vote. Hence both the Democratic and the Republican party sidestep the issue and leave to the Negro masses the task of solving the question in their

own way. The Negro bourgeoisie, in siding with the white bourgeoisie, is making the issue clearer.

The two capitalist parties also refuse to take any steps to prevent lynching. The Dyer anti-Lynching Bill which was introduced into Congress two years ago was defeated. The Negroes placed great hopes in this bill, only to have them shattered. The resolution presented by the African Blood Brotherhood called for the formation of joint councils by labour organizations and Negroes to take action against lynching. Only labour baiters could be opposed to such action — but the Sanhedrin opposed it.

A further resolution of the Workers' Party protested against the encroachments of American Imperialism in Haiti and Santo Domingo and demanded its withdrawal. But blood was not thicker than water. The conference did not protest — and lined up with the oppressive white American capitalist government against workers of the Negro race.

Of the 12,000,000 Negroes in the United States 89% live in the South. Of the more than 10,500,000, 79% are tenant farmers or farm labourers on the big cotton and tobacco plantations. The remainder, with the exception of the Negro bourgeoisie, are workers in the textile and lumber mills, iron and coal mines. The farm labour is exploited to the limit. Wages are very low, hours long. The tenant farmers, on the other hand, are in a most miserable state. They are generally heavily in debt and consequently are held in a state of peonage. They are not allowed to leave their farms; if they run away, they become fugitives, are returned by the sheriff and sent to prison, whence they are leased out to contractors to work off their debt. They are forced to work under the lash; many of them have been beaten to death.

From a conference composed as the All-Race Conference was constituted, it was to be expected that the Workers' Party resolution calling for the penalising of the peonage system and the formation of tenants' unions for self-protection, would be rejected.

The All-Race Conference resulted in complete treachery to the Negro workers and tenant farmers. It elected an executive committee of seven, which is to conduct the affairs of the organization till the next conference in 1925. Not a single labour member was included in the executive, although presumably the labour group was the "main" group of the conference, as the chairman had said. The conference was a most wholesome experience for the Negro workers. The race question is beginning to resolve into a class question. Following the lead of the Communists, who together with the African Blood Brotherhood were the only ones to develop a clear line of action, the Negroes will line up with the white workers, forcing Compers to act. This they will do despite the exhortation of the capitalist press to "beware of the Communists".

## ECONOMICS

### Speculating Capital the latest Phase of Capitalist Development.

By Gustav Schlesinger (Vienna).

Capitalism in Europe has entered on a new phase of its development. In Germany and Austria in particular, this new phase has nearly reached its culminating point, or at least has gone so far that a clear opinion can be formed concerning it. This phase is that of the "rule of speculating capital".

The development of capitalism implies the victory of financial capital over industrial capital. The reason for this victory is the fact that financial capital represents a higher form of industrial organization and therefore renders possible an increased and more profitable production.

After the collapse of the Central Powers, financial capital began to proceed more energetically, which meant the introduction of the above mentioned new phase of capitalism. This sudden advance of financial capital differed, not only in extent, but also in its nature from the normal development of financial capital.

The change from war production to peace production, the great destruction in the economic field caused by the war, gave rise to an enormous shortage of capital in all spheres of economic life. The inflation which set in has only partly veiled this